GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:286
ANSWERED ON:19.03.2007
IMPORT OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES
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Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the stock position of various foodgrains including wheat, rice, pulses, edible oil, sugar etc. in the country as on March 1, 2007;

(b) whether there is a shortage of such stocks as per the stocking norms;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Government had earlier allowed imports of the said items at reduced tariffs;

(e) if so, the details thereof indicating the quantum and price of the said articles contracted and actually imported till date by the Government and private traders;

(f) whether the Government has decided to allow further import in view of its shortage in the country;

(g) if so, the details thereof and the time by which these are likely to be imported; and

(h) the other steps being taken by the Government to meet this shortage?

Answer

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR)

(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) & (h): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (h) OF THE STARRED QUESTION NO. 286 DUE FOR ANSWER ON 19.03.2007 IN THE LOK SABHA.

(a): The stock position of wheat and rice in the country in the Central Pool and sugar as on March 01, 2007 is as under:

In lakh MTs

Rice	Wheat	Total
139.67	51.00	190.67

The quantity of imported wheat lying at the ports as on 01.03.07 is 5.11 lakh tons. The stock position of sugar is provisionally estimated at about 131 lakh tons. Stocks of edible oils and pulses are mostly held by private traders, who also import under Open General License (OGL) and hence the stock position is not available.

(b): There is no shortage as per buffer norms, that exist for rice and wheat.

(c): Does not arise.

(d) & (e): Government had permitted import of wheat, sugar, edible oils and pulses at zero percent/reduced duty. Details of quantum and price of wheat and pulses actually imported/contracted by Government agencies is at Annexure A. Available information on articles imported by private traders is at Annexure B.

(f) & (g): Imports of wheat, rice, sugar, pulses and edible oils under OGL are permitted by the Government subject to payment of prescribed duties/zero percent duties.

(h): Several steps have been taken by the Government to improve the availability of essential commodities in the country which include the following:-

(i) Export of wheat has been banned upto 31.12.2007.

(ii) Government has decided to release upto 4 lakh tonnes of wheat from the central pool for sale under the Open Market Sale Scheme.

(iii) Customs duty on import of pulses was reduced to zero percent on June 8, 2006 and validity of this order has been extended upto 1.8.2007.

(iv) Ban was imposed on export of pulses with effect from June 22, 2006 (except export of kabuli chana permitted w.e.f. 7.3.07). The period of validity of this order has been further extended upto 31.3.2008.

(v) The Central Government had issued a Central Order to enable State Governments to invoke stock limits in respect of wheat and pulses to prevent hoarding and the validity of this order has been extended by another six months vide order dated 27.2.2007.

(vi) In order to provide remunerative prices to the farmers, Government of India announces Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for oilseeds every year, with appropriate enhancement to encourage oilseed production.

(vii) To give better returns to farmers, Government has declared a bonus of Rs.100 per quintal of wheat for Rabi Marketing Season, making the total procurement price Rs.850 per quital.

(viii) Government has permitted import of wheat duty free till 31 December 2007 to ensure that there is no shortage.

(ix) Government has decided to import, if necessary, upto 3 million tons of wheat through the STC for Public Distribution System and other welfare schemes like Mid Day Meals and ICDS.